



**Manchester
Metropolitan
University**



**Manchester
Children's
Book Festival**




Boy, Everywhere

**A Teaching Resource
based on the book by
A.M.Dassu**

In partnership with





“It is poignant to be exploring the themes in ‘Boy, Everywhere’ 10 years after the uprising began in Syria, which led to an unforeseen civil war in which millions of Syrians were displaced to surrounding regions and around the world to start again as refugees. I hope Sami’s story will encourage discussion, challenge stereotypes and help build empathy in our increasingly fractured society.”

I A. M. Dassu (Author)

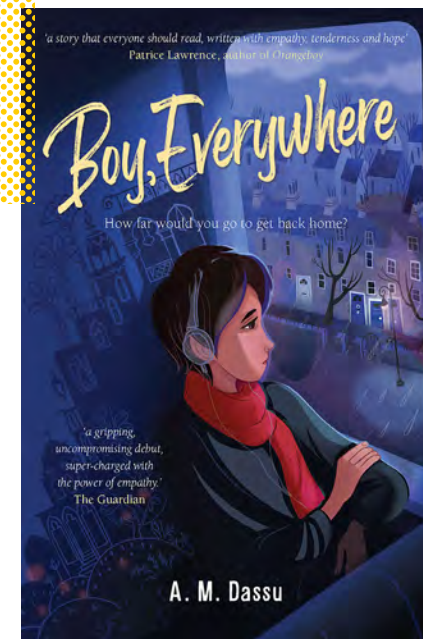
“Manchester Children’s Book Festival Director, Kaye Tew says: “With relatable, teenage characters, this novel offers a unique opportunity to explore the issues that young people like this face but, more importantly, it shows the lives they leave behind and just how similar their everyday worries and pre-occupations are to those of their classmates.”



Boy Everywhere

Boy, Everywhere chronicles the harrowing journey taken from Syria to the UK by teen refugee Sami and his family; from privilege to poverty, across countries and continents, from a smuggler’s den in Turkey to a prison in Manchester.

Boy, Everywhere has been shortlisted for the Redbridge Book Award, Calderdale Book of the Year award, and the Sheffield Children’s Book Award, longlisted for the Branford Boase Award and selected for the Read for Empathy Collection 2021. It was described by The Guardian as “a gripping, uncompromising debut, super-charged with the power of empathy.”



This teaching resource presents practical ideas for using the book in classrooms and includes a number of useful links to websites, where teachers can find videos, lesson plans and other resources that invite pupils to read, discuss and respond creatively to the book, challenging common misconceptions about what refugees experience and what they have left behind.

Boy Everywhere, published by Old Barn Books, can be purchased from [Bookshop.org](https://www.bookshop.org) or your preferred retailer.

BEFORE READING

When choosing a book, we rely hugely on our first impressions; the cover, the title, how the book feels, the blurb on the back all influence our decision and none of this is accidental. This is all part of our reading experience.

Your pupils, more than likely, have just been given this book to read, so, before doing anything else, spend some time asking them to consider the choices that have been made by the publisher, the designer, the editor, the author.

The Cover

Consider the images and why they have been chosen. The colours, the expression on the boy's face, the rain, the juxtaposition of the English terraced houses and the faded backdrop of his home country ... why have these choices been made? What do they tell us to expect from the book? Think about the symbolism of the images chosen.

The Title

What does the title of the book lead us to think about the story? Why was that title chosen? Tease out the connotations of the words 'boy' and 'everywhere'? What is the significance of the comma?

The Reviews

These are on the back cover and also on the inside front cover. Ask pupils to discuss what is said and to take note of who the reviews are written by. What is the effect of including the comments written by young readers? Do any of the reviews strike them as particularly effective?

SUGGESTION :

Having a class discussion, using any of the questions mentioned here, before reading it will tease out some of the themes and the pre-conceptions held by the young readers. Who knows what a refugee is? What words would you associate with the word refugee? Why? How does the media play a part in your understanding of what a refugee is? Do you think that the media always reports on these issues fairly and without bias? Why/why not?

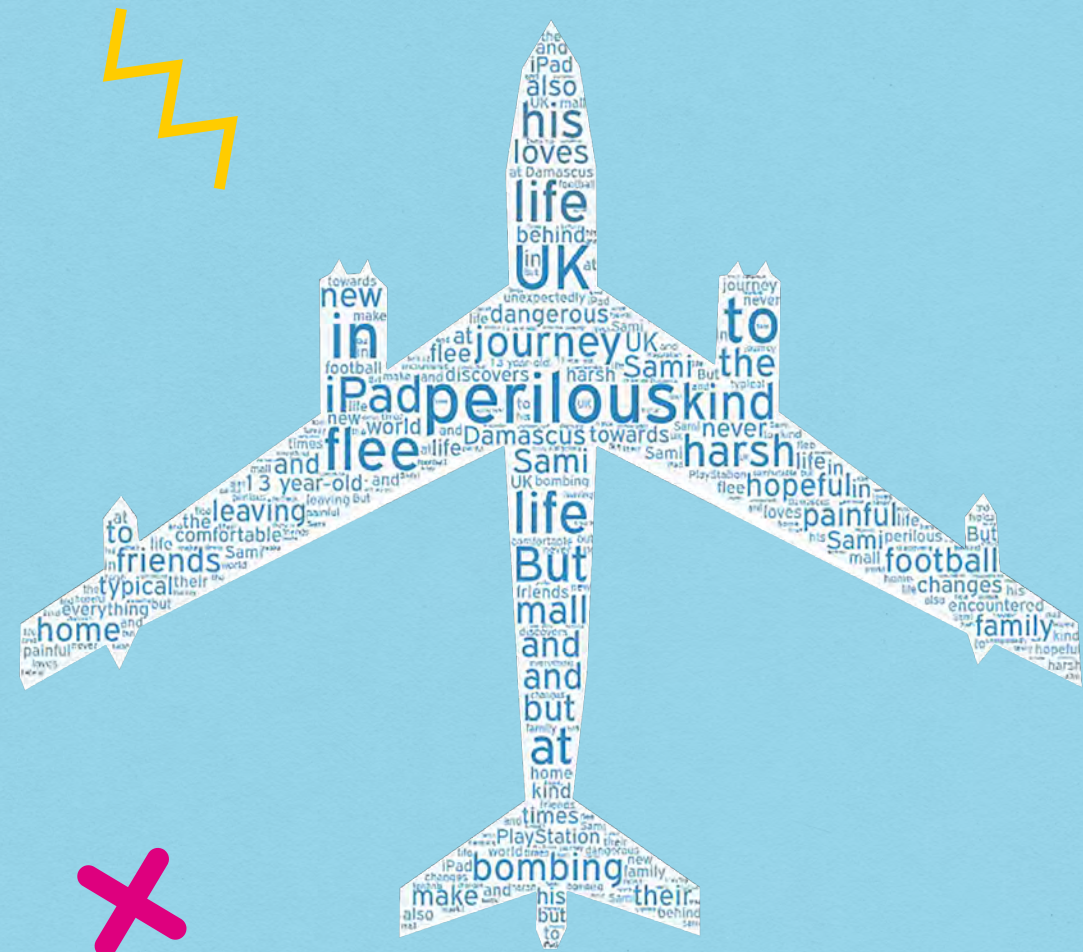
| The Blurb

The blurb that makes up the second paragraph on the back cover and the extract in the first para, give further clues to the content. What do pupils think about the extract that has been chosen? Where in the story do they think this is from? How do they think Sami must be feeling at this point? Will it be OK when he gets to England?

SUGGESTION:

Print out the blurb, cut up into sentences and ask the pupils to put these together in what they think is the right order. This will necessitate looking at the language choices and slows down the reading process, allowing them time to consider questions like: What is the effect of choosing words like 'perilous' and 'painful'? What does the phrase 'Leaving everything behind' mean to them?

Ask pupils to create a word cloud, like the one on the opposite page, using words taken from the blurb. Ask pupils to consider the words, pick out some to discuss in more detail and then ask them to decide what story is being told, writing their thoughts around the plane picture, or another shape they might choose. Working in pairs or as a class, they might also group the words into categories, explaining why certain words have been put together.



READING AND DISCUSSION

Additional resources and notes about the book, including a video of A.M.Dassu reading the first chapter of *Boy, Everywhere* can be found on Az's own website:

amdassu.com/boy-everywhere-resources/

Play the video in class, with pupils reading along.

Chapter one immediately shows the type of life that Sami and his friends live. What are the similarities to pupils' own lives? What kind of life do they think Sami leads? What are the differences between Sami's life and their own? Did anything about Sami's life in Damascus surprise them? What kinds of things does Sami worry about, or make mention of? (Hint: think material things.)

- What do you think of the other characters, especially the other children in the class? How do you think you might fit in with this class?
- How is the outside world brought into their normal, everyday lives? Compare the reactions of the adults (teachers, parents) to that of Sami and Joseph. How are the actions of the adults described in the chapter? What do you think might be the chief concern of the adults? Why?
- What was Joseph's reaction after hearing about the bombing? What does this tell you about bombings where they live? What is the relationship between Sami and Joseph? Why does George bully Joseph? What does this tell us about schools in Damascus?

SUGGESTIONS:

After listening to the chapter and reading along, in small groups or pairs, ask pupils to look at some of these questions and find evidence for their answers in the text before presenting their answers back to the class in a broader discussion.

Ask the class to consider how the chapter ends. Sami says that he will always look after Joseph. What do your pupils think that first chapter is setting up? What happens next?

| RESEARCH

Asking pupils to consider, possibly for the first time, a topic that they might have heard discussed at home, or on the news might raise issues, especially for pupils who have experienced this in some way, or where there might be conflicting opinions about the topic. We assume that teachers know their pupils and that schools will have their own ways of addressing this.

Further advice can be found on the UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) website, where there is also a bank of free teaching materials on refugees, asylum, migration and statelessness, including lesson plans, animations and class discussion sheets, suitable for all age groups, as well as facts and figures:

unhcr.org/uk/teaching-about-refugees.html

WORDS MATTER

A good place to start is the language around refugees. Words matter, and activities and research around the following terms is available on the UNHCR website: refugees, migrants, internally displaced people, asylum seekers, returnees, stateless people. There are animations and explanations on the [UNHCR](https://unhcr.org) website.

SUGGESTION:

In groups, set students a research task.

This could be around the language used to describe refugees, statistics, where they come from, how many are granted asylum, common misconceptions, the way that the refugee experience is reported in the media ...

Pupils could be asked to create a poster and/or feed their findings back to the class.

ANALYSE

There are any number of extracts that could be selected from this book. We have chosen one from the episode on the boat and have suggested a number of questions that can be used to analyse the text in detail.

Read the extract on page 106-107 beginning from 'Mama sat on the edge' to 'we were now cut off from the outside world.'

1. 'Mama sat on the edge of the boat and slowly slipped her legs in to the water' – Why do you think there is reluctance in the way Mama moves? What does this tell us about her?
2. 'The water was icy' – Highlight all the description of Sami's surroundings. Why do you think the author chose this particular atmosphere?
3. 'Her legs wobbled every few steps' – Highlight and label the verb in this sentence that infantilises the mother. What does it tell you about the way Sami currently views his mother? Why do you think the author has used a role reversal of parent and child here?

4. 'My Air Jordans were ruined.' – What is Sami bothered about here? What does the use of the simple sentence here highlight?
5. 'I looked at Baba and my stomach lurched, wondering if he'd be left behind' – What is Sami worried about here? Why has the verb lurched been used? What are the connotations of this word?
6. 'Where would we go now?..' – What does the use of these rhetorical questions highlight about this journey they are going to undertake?
7. 'We were now cut off from the outside world.' Consider the use of simple sentence here? What does it tell you about how Sami is feeling? Which words are important in this sentence and why?

SUGGESTIONS:

It would be interesting, having worked on this passage, to set students the task of finding out how such experiences are discussed in the media. They might also be asked to write their own newspaper report, including some of their findings and using Sami's story as the hook.

WHAT IF?

A good way to really engage with a text is to respond creatively to it. Boy, Everywhere and the themes addressed, present lots of opportunities for pupils to do this.

The question 'what if?' is a useful starter for coming up with ideas. What if:

- you were suddenly told you were leaving your home, like Sami? What could you simply not live without? They might start with a list, or you might create a list as a class, with everyone contributing ideas. I-pads, trainers, favourite music, friends will probably feature. When what they can take is limited, what would they actually pack? What would they have to leave behind? How will they make these decisions? How will they feel about the things they leave behind?
- there had been a chapter in the book from Joseph's perspective? Once Sami leaves Syria, we only get to imagine Joseph's experience from Sami's perspective. Write a chapter in the book, or a diary entry, from the perspective of Joseph, when he realises his best friend has left him. Think about how things would have changed for Joseph without Sami. How will he feel?
- Sami had managed to get on the plane and run away? What would have happened next? What might that chapter have included?

After considering these, or other questions, start the writing process with five minutes free writing: pen on paper, no stopping, no censoring, possibly starting off with a starter like 'I had five minutes to pack up my life ...'



CONSCIENCE ALLEY

In chapters 9 and 10, Sami decides to take money from his Baba, to help his friend, Aadam.

A useful technique for exploring any kind of dilemma faced by a character, providing an opportunity to analyse a decisive moment in greater detail, is Conscience Alley.

The class forms two lines facing each other. Each line takes a different point of view, in this instance: whether Sami should steal money from his Baba to give to Aadam, or not.

One person (the teacher or a confident pupil) takes the role of the character and walks between the lines as each member of the group speaks their advice.

When the character reaches the end of the alley, they make their decision.

This activity is sometimes known as Decision Alley, or Thought Tunnel.

A video with instructions can be found [here](#).

A SCHOOLS Q&A Event

We would like to invite schools who use this resource to submit pupils' questions or comments for a panel event featuring A.M.Dassu.

SAVE THE DATE:
Wednesday 14th July, 2021 11am–12noon.

The event will have a 'live' element but will also be broadcast. Details will be confirmed nearer the time but you can sign up [HERE](#) to express an interest and to be kept informed.

Anyone signing up for this event will be invited to submit questions for inclusion in the event.

Keep in touch

This resource was created by Kaye Tew (MCBF at Manchester Metropolitan University) and Sajeda Amir (Levenshulme High School). Thanks to Old Barn Books and A.M.Dassu for permission to use the book text and illustrations.

Should you use this resource, or have any other suggestions for using the book in classrooms, we would love to hear from you. Email k.tew@mmu.ac.uk or contact us on social media.

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